

THE MISSIONARY CALLING, ROMANS 15:7-33

Pax Romana 33

◆ **Intro:** Have you ever wanted to visit Rome? See the Vatican, Michael Angelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel?



The ruins of the Pantheon?

The Colosseum? Pieces of a culture that dates back to 500



years BC? Well if so, you're in the company of the Apostle Paul



who also wanted to visit Rome, but for different reasons which



become clearer near the end of his letter to the

Christians there.

◆ Romans chapter 15 started out encouraging a unity in the family of Jesus; that we accept and welcome each other. That we don't look down on one another. That we build each other up. These are the *last* things the evil spiritual powers want to happen. They would rather we take offense at each other's words or be mad at each other, and walk away from each other if things hurt our feelings. It's strange that Christianity actually stands for the opposites of what most of us tend to do, isn't it? Paul demonstrates this anti-natural attitude in his letter to the Christians in Rome. In this last part of his letter he goes a step further than accepting your brother to seeking those who aren't your brother! Paul wanted to visit the church in Rome. But he wanted to visit them so that they could help him continue on to Spain (24, 28). As far as he knew people in Spain hadn't heard of

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God's coming to planet Earth in the person of Jesus. Telling people with no knowledge or interest in God was his passion (just look at v20). So it is in the spirit of missions that Paul writes a treatise on Christian doctrine to believers in the famous city of Rome. It's like he's telling them what he preaches, and what he stands for so that they can decide if they want to support him as a missionary to Spain. In the process we have received one of the clearest articulations of the Christian faith; the Book of Romans. I'll summarize the entire book and in so doing the essence of faith in Jesus the Messiah: 1) man is not basically good but hopelessly evil. We are far more sinful than we imagine. 2) God is far more loving than we ever imagined and freely forgives sinners who put their faith in Jesus' death in their stead. 3) This faith changes people such that they become tools of goodness and love throughout the world. Or in three words, guilt, grace, and gratitude. That's basically the outline of Roman.



◆ The element in chapter 15 that I have selected to consider today is the missionary characteristic of the Christian faith. It's in that "gratitude" section of the letter which describes the kind of life that pleases God. I'd like to divide our study today along the lines of Jesus' statement in the Great Commission: Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father, son, and Holy Spirit. 1) make disciples, and 2) of all nations.

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◆ **1. MAKE DISCIPLES:** Paul demonstrates that **The Church's job is to make disciples of Jesus, not just add members to the roles,** or just enjoy their forgiveness and freedom.

◆ That is to say, that we as a family of people exist to get each other, and other people to actually live, walk, and talk with the one true God on a daily basis to his glory. That's what a disciple does; he follows his teacher around, lives with him, works with him, and interacts in every aspect of life, with him. A disciple is much like an apprentice. We're talking today about a couple of the Church's basic purposes. To go to the nations, is the mission purpose. To make disciples is discipleship purpose.

◆ Now what might these purposes mean for us? Well, to start, it means we exist to convince our children to seek God when they get up in the morning. (There's a certain urgency in this for estimates show that 30-40% of church youth are walking away from the church today). The Church is here to form people who *chose* to do things God's way, even when it will cost them money, position, or even their life. We don't just want you to know some info for a test. The Church is here to help individuals seek God in the dark of night as well as in prosperity, to consult him before they buy things, and to heed his Holy Spirit when he tells us to help someone else. In other words, to live every hour in the shadow of God. This is a primary goal of the Christian church; to produce people radically in love with God.

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- ◆ [I discovered not so long ago that one of my sons carries canned goods around in his car because when he sees people at stoplights asking for help and saying they're hungry, he then has a way to help them. In my heart I thought, "Yes! That's it. His faith is more than a concept. He's living out his love for God!"]
- ◆ A. Now, this being true, that the church exists to make devoted followers of Jesus, we should bear in mind that this is much deeper than to keep it's members happy, although that is certainly a fine thing and nobody is against that. Ministering to members is also one of the church's purposes, but this may not include comfort and preference, and in an evil world, I dare say most of the time it doesn't.
- ◆ The main thing is to turn out people who are passionately in **love** with God, who **pray** with their children each day at home, who talk to Jesus about their **business** decisions, who read his **word** daily and try to respond to an offensive client in a Christ-like way, -if all that we do doesn't result in a real disciple who will **swallow** pride, who will serve and love, who will seek out the **lonely** man in the crowd, and give up **steak** (yikes! ch14) rather than hinder spiritual growth, then the church will have missed making disciples.
- ◆ A lot of the time we start to think that we are here to make ourselves comfortable. That we are here for us! But we are not! We are here to get people to love and obey Jesus and

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enjoy his good way. We are here to help people love and interact with God. And if our kids grow up and go to church but don't think about God any other time, we have still missed the goal.

◆ And this is what Paul wanted to do. He was a man on mission. In the very first chapter he explains his calling.

◆ *"Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." Romans 1:5, NIV.*

◆ Notice the phrase "obedience that comes from faith" because he repeats the same concept at the end of his letter in our text.

◆ *"I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the *Gentiles to obey God* by what I have said and done--" Romans 15:18, NIV.*

◆ Paul's object is not information but changed lives.

◆ B. Observe the worship vocabulary Paul uses in 15-17.

◆ *"I have written to you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God." Romans 15:15-17, NIV.*

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◆ These are worship terms. Being a part of the church is more than going to a church on the weekend. It's living as God's priests in regular life.

◆ C. Now let's ponder our own call to make disciples. Are we developing our children into disciples, or are we just attending to holy things on Sunday morning? Do we allot as much time to learning of God as we do to learning soccer? Do we pray, and long for our friends to be more than friends, but sisters and brothers in the Lord, or are we fine with just golfing with them? Do we take advantage of the discipleship process in our church. We offer a series of classes, small groups, events that go beyond joining the church. We offer classes in spiritual habits, knowing your spiritual gifts, learning to talk your faith, testimony. Take advantage of opportunities.

◆ New members need mentors who have coffee with them and discuss basic teachings of the Bible. Long time members need to learn to disciple new ones. Take these things on, don't be afraid to learn as you go.

◆ This all leads us to the second main element I'd like to look at in Romans 15, which is that Christ's Church is aimed at changing lives all right, but not just locally; across the whole world!

◆ **2. OFF ALL NATIONS: The church's job is to pursue people who are not pursuing God.** See, the church is not a club like Sam's Club where it exists exclusively for card holders. It's not like a golf club where you have to be a member to go

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there. If all the workers at a golf club would go out looking for people who can't hit a golfball, and offering for free to teach them, that would be kinda like what the church is supposed to be. The Church's job is to serve and love people who are not in the Church! This mission orientation means...

◆ A. Christians are goers and senders. Now when I pair these two it is because not all of us are able to actually go. Not all of us are called to leave our culture for a foreign land but all Christians are to work for this. Not all of us have the opportunity to travel the earth. But all Christians want the earth to be traveled and evangelized. And all Christians want Jesus to return and restore this earth. And Jesus said that would happen when the Gospel has reached all peoples.

◆ *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."*
Matthew 24:14, NIV.

◆ Note that word "nations." Its the same as the term "gentiles" which you will find oft repeated in our chapter for today, Romans 15. In fact I counted 10 out of 24 uses of the term in the whole book of Romans all to occur in chapter 15. Gentile means "nation" or "people" in Greek. The term is "ethne" from which we get the english "ethnic" describing another background or culture.

Jesus' last instruction to disciples was to go into all the world and make disciples of all ethne/ peoples. Not just our own or people like us. Not just our city or country. But we are specifically to go

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to peoples that are not like us, who don't eat what we eat, or dress how we dress, or talk how we talk, or live where we live. They already have other religions and gods they believe in.

◆ Why might Jesus tell us to do this? Why not let Irishmen focus on Irishmen, and Nigerians take care of Nigerians? And why do other countries send missionaries to America? Did you know that more people come in to the US to do Christian mission than we send out of the US to do mission? Why are they going across the world to us? Why are we going across the world to them?

Because that's what Christians do; they go to the different and other. Maybe because it helps convince a person of real love.

◆ Do you feel the gravity of this concept? World mission is hard and unnatural! Think about who you hang out with at school. Kids who are like you, right? Kids who like what you like, and play what you play. Who do you gravitate toward after church? Your family. Friends you already know. People who you like, and are like you. (I should remind us more often of the Three Minute rule: after worship try to spend the first three minutes speaking with someone you don't know that well.) What happens when you arrive at Life Group for a meal and bible study? I'll tell you what happens first. The ladies all gather over here and talk, and the guys all gather over there and talk, usually by a grill, an engine, or a piece of sporting equipment.

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- ◆ We like to imagine ourselves conversing with a very rich and diverse variety of people every day. But separate research studies show that ...about 80 percent of our daily words are shared with a small group of about five trusted confidants. We tend to go where we're comforted, and comfortable and that's almost always with people just like us. And the Christian faith is a calling to step beyond comfort. We accept discomfort for the mission of sharing God's hope and demonstrating love.
- ◆ B. In being goers and senders Christians are imitating their Father God who is the First goer and a sender. And again this is something of a spiritual nature that goes against human nature. It is in the nature of love to put out, to go out, to seek out. It is in the nature of selfishness to soak in, to stay in, and to wait to be sought. It was always God's character to go and it was always God's plan to seek people from every nation of men.
 - ◆ Paul points this out by quoting (9-12) a verse saying this from each of the three divisions of Hebrew scriptures: Law, Prophets, Writings (Writings includes wisdom literature and historical literature). He's simply showing that all scripture from the beginning carried this same theme: God's people are called out of all people to go out to all people and bless them for God.
- ◆ **Conclusion:** Now then, we can praise God for the rich history Sunrise has had in missions. For a whole decade you folks have

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been sending and going as a group to Peru to love on people in need there and to point to Jesus. It seems like that door has closed to us, but the call to go has not, and I know your hearts of compassion have not ceased either! Lets pray God opens another door, and raises up more of you who want to cross barriers to love in Christs name. Maybe the Buursmas need help in the Philippines?

◆Why do it? Because God sent us. But first he came to us to give us the hope of salvation from sin. That's information too good to keep inside. This is the path of real joy too. Put Jesus first in your life. Love him and obey him. Put others next and yourself last. That's what Jesus did. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2, NIV.

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Children's message: show letters spelling Joy. Jesus first, others second, yourself last. Best way to find joy.

Song to tune of jingle bells:

J O Y, J O Y

This is what it means

Jesus first and yourself last and

Others I between.

J means always do what Jesus says is right, and believe him most. You'll be happier.

O means don't try to get the best donut for yourself. Let your friends go before you. If your trying to decide whether to ride bikes or play fort, ask what your friend would like to do. You'll be happier. Joy

Y means stop being selfish. You'll be happier.